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ABSTRACT

This research project outlines the role of art education as a part of the professional identity of people working in different fields of art and education and explains the relationship between the productive and receptive dimensions of art education. Also, the project presents a theory on the relation between visual and verbal conceptualization. The main goal of art education is seen as the development of the learner's personal and cultural identity. The project uses an experiential-constructivist model of art learning that evolved in the wide context of visual culture. The project consists of case studies and interviews that explore the elements of identity formation. First, the project approaches the cultural and social identity of kindergarten through university students through the concept of multiculturalism and assesses the role of social background, nationality, ethnicity, gender, and different groups in producing and interpreting images. The second part focuses on the construction of an art educator's professional identity. The third dimension investigates classroom interaction from the point of view of visual conceptualization. Finnish art works from the 1980s-90s are used for assessment. (Contains 25 references.) (BT)

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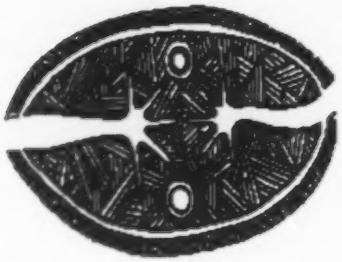

InSEA

"Images and Identities"

by

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IMAGES AND IDENTITIES

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Research project IMAGES AND IDENTITIES

The main goal of this research project is to outline the role of art education as a part of professional identity of people working in different fields of art and education. Another aim is to increase the understanding of the relationship between productive and receptive dimensions of art education. Related to this, different parts of the project aim to create theoretical information of the relation between visual and verbal conceptualization. The researchers of the project develop approaches to making and interpreting images, considering the whole field of visual culture, for the needs of different age groups and contexts. The main goal of art education is seen to be the development of learner's personal and cultural identity.

The basis of this research project is an experiential-constructivist model of art learning which is evolved in the wide context of visual culture. The project consists of case studies and interviews that explore the elements that form the identity of a) students going through a period of transition and b) pre and inservice art educators in connection with c) making and interpreting images. Significance of images as contributory factors in identity construction is examined in kindergartens, secondary, high, vocational, and folk high schools, and in higher education and museums.

The research project approaches the *cultural and social identity* of the learners through the wide concept of multiculturalism and asks what are the roles of social background, nationality, ethnicity, gender, and different groups in producing and interpreting images. Corporeality as a factor of *personal identity* is approached by studying the learners' conceptions of their own physical limitations and possibilities. Personal identity is closely related to the question of *losing one's identity*. One of the research topics in this project is to find out whether the postmodern, multi-role self-identity is experienced as an opportunity or a threat. The project examines also how the learners' ethical and ideological views are reflected in the making and interpreting of images.

The second dimension the project focuses on is the *construction of an art educator's professional identity*. In order for the identity to develop one must consider at least four role requirements. This means that the educator is expected to be a teacher, a cultural worker, an artist, and a researcher, all in one. The educators' willingness and possibilities to combine these four roles is explored with the help of interviews and action research. Action research is evolved in the direction of artistic study by searching for parallels between the working methods of reflective teacher and artist. Thus, the question of teaching and research as a form of art is also touched upon. The third aim of the research project is to figure out classroom interaction from the point of view *visual conceptualization*. Part of this goal is to evolve the method of 'pictorial picture analysis', i.e. interpreting images through art making. These parts of the project require attention of the study processes a visual artist uses in his or her work.

The methodological focus of the project lies on interpretive and emancipatory approaches. The aim of the research team is to find common points between scientific and artistic research and reporting. This aim is sought by elaborating action research toward artistic direction. The project's purpose is also to create connections between art criticism, ethnography, and educational criticism. The emancipatory possibilities of self-reflective theme interviews are studied by connecting productive and receptive activities to them. MA and PhD students involved in this research project form two independent action research groups. Part of the MA students will present their work in the form of exhibition and written report. All doctoral students are working on a dissertation based on articles, or 'a combined thesis' that consists of both scientific essays and an exhibition.

Involved in the research project are researchers and doctoral students from the University of Art and Design Helsinki. PhD in Education Seija Kairavuori concentrates in her interview study ART EDUCATORS IN SECONDARY AND HIGH SCHOOL on the formation of professional identity. Kairavuori approaches her research topic by asking how art teachers working in schools ground the reasons for their career choice, the significance of their subject, and also how they define their job. MA Kaisa Kettunen explores in her project CHANGING MUSEUM EDUCATION possibilities of art making as a means of interpreting images. This is done by putting up a series of workshops targeted to family-like groups that consist of museum guests of different ages. MA Sinikka Virkkala examines in her work ART IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION the role of images in the context of interdisciplinary arts education. She aims at finding, what kind of parallels artistic activities have in promoting children's development and in constructing the professional identity of kindergarten teacher students. MA Pirkko Ahoniemi studies in her project EXPERIENTIAL CLOTHING DESIGN identity construction in the process of craft design. Her research aims at identifying how art interpretation as a part of clothing design process can support preservice craft teachers' identity construction. In her research FORMS AND POSSIBILITIES OF RECIPROCAL INTERACTION IN ART EDUCATION, MA Marja Rastas aims at figuring out the practices, meanings, possibilities and factors included in the dialogue between teacher and student in young adults´ non-professional art training.

SELF-PORTRAITS - PORTRAYALS: Art making in interpreting images and constructing identities. Marjo Räsänen's study within the research project IMAGES AND IDENTITIES.

This study is based on my doctoral thesis *BUILDING BRIDGES. Experiental art understanding: A work of art as a means of understanding and constructing self* (1997). In my dissertation I developed a theory of experiential art learning and applied an art interpretation model derived from it to an action research carried out with a class of first year high school students. The main subject of my thesis was transfer between understanding art and self.

My current research is divided into three parts: it examines the identity formation of a) young people going through a period of transition and b) preservice art teachers while c) interpreting images through own art making. The main purpose of the research is to find out the possibilities of interpreting images to support the self construction of students finishing their studies in secondary, high, or vocational schools. This happens through analyzing the products of 'high' art and other visual culture with the help of one's own appropriations. According to the open concept of art, the images are approached from the viewpoint of both artworld and the world of individuals and institutions outside it. The main objects used in interpretation are Finnish works of art from the 1980-90s. Along with those, also other visual material and pictures related to students' everyday life are examined. I aim at blurring the boundaries between art and everyday life. The research explores the possibilities of visual conceptualization in the art disciplines traditionally based on verbal concepts. The goal of interpretation is to study the learner's identities and self construction with the help of contextualization of personal and cultural knowledge.

There are nine students from the UIAH Department of Art Education taking part to the research project SELF-PORTRAITS - PORTRAYALS. These students carry out teaching experiments and also participate in their follow-up. The reports of these case studies are a part of their master thesis. The research project studies the experiences of the preservice art teachers in the transition stage between a student and a teacher. The meaning of this project as a whole is therefore manifold: it deals with a crucial pedagogical question of our postmodern world, the formation of identities, and develops a new approach between theory and practice by offering young art teachers the possibility to combine work counselling and research orientation.

Research problems and related literature

The roots of my research topic are in my work as an art teacher in secondary and high school. I have become familiar with the problemacy of the identity of an art educator in my work, but also when organizing student teaching and the training of the supervisors in the Department of Art Education. The issues of constructing self through interpreting images has developed over those fifteen years I have taught classes in art understanding for the art education students and adviced their theses. In my models of experiential art learning and art interpretation developed in my dissertation I focused on the interaction between self-understanding and art understanding. My new project continues to explore the same issues but it concentrates on contemporary Finnish

art and treats the images outside the artworld as comparative material. I elaborate my method of 'pictorial picture analysis' where the disciplines of art research are integrated into one's own art making. My aim is to go deeper into the problem of teenagers self-construction, and to find new angles from youth research to my earlier ideas based on developmental psychology.

My research is based on the art learning model I have developed from the basis of experiential learning conception (Kolb 1984). In the model of experiential art understanding derived from the conception, I combined experiential-constructivist learning theories with some cognitive art learning models (Parsons 1987, Koroscik 1997, Perkins 1994). This approach is my contribution to defining the basis of postmodern art education. My *views on knowledge and learning* are also related to emancipatory interests and critical pedagogy (Giroux 1992). My *view on art* is instrumentalistic and has connections to the institutional theory of art (Danto 1990). According to my model, art experience comes into being when personal and social identities of the artist and the recipient meet on the terms of the context where the work of art is explored, guided by the artwork's material and expressive cues. I approach the artwork's contextualization by the help of art disciplines based on verbalization and develop these inquiry methods on the terms of the learner's lifeworld and artistic production.

I express my two-dimensional research problem metaphorically as a question of the relation between SELF-PORTRAIT and PORTRAYAL: selfhood is always dealing with how I see myself and others, and how I think others see me. In my project the issue of identity construction is expanded to include also the 'self-portraits' of art education students. I use these to figure nine portraits of preservice art teachers. The main goal of this research is to study the possibilities of interpreting contemporary art in adolescents' identity construction. The art education students participating the project explore the issue in their own case studies. In addition to this, each student's research target group will also take part to a tenth case study, executed by me in the Museum of Modern Art Kiasma.

I approach the formation of adolescents' identities through Finnish works of art from the last two decades that break the tradition of portrait making (self-portrait, portrait, group portrait). As the material I shall use the works introduced by the Museum of Modern Art in its cd-rom program and at a small scale exhibition in the fall 1999. Links to other visuals will be established by Kiasma's exhibition of Asian visual culture *Cities on the Move* (Nov. 8 - Dec. 15). This material will be connected with visual material from the students' everyday life. After visiting the museum the students will participate in workshops, where they discuss their experiences and transform them into their own art.

The purpose of this experiment is to build a bridge between youth cultures and artworlds and to combine verbal and visual conceptualization in interpreting images. I approach the learners' cultural and social identity through asking what role nationality, social background, ethnicity, gender, and different groups (youth cultures, subcultures, family) play in interpreting images. I ask how these factors affect the way one responds to an image, how they manifest themselves in a student's verbal and visual interpretations, and how conscious young people are of these factors. Studying dimensions of social identity is not only a part of my own research task but it is also a crucial emancipatory goal for experiential interpretation of images. I want to develop new methods for 'contextualizing the universal' and to help the students to see the significance of discourses to the values that they think are not dependent on culture (friendship, love, hate, war, peace, death, spirituality etc.).

Social-cultural and personal identities cannot be separated from each other. Interpreting images is always based on the learner's personal history and on the here and now experiences created by the learning situation. One of my research problems deals with a crucial dimension of personal identity, the corporeality: I examine young people's body-image and their conceptions of their own physical limitations and abilities. My research interests include also the images that a body creates via clothing and the messages the world of young people's objects convey.

The dimension of personal identity is also closely connected to the question of losing one's identity. I want to find out how young people deal with the postmodern, view of multiple self. Does it lead to 'reducing' one's self corresponding to the stereotypes society and media give us, or are young people able to maintain their self-coherence despite of their many identities and changing

roles? I also ask, how young people see the relationship between man and nature. Is man a part of the course of nature (birth, death, health, illness, sexuality)? In what do young people trust and what risks do they see in life (future, destiny, agency)? What kind of ethical choices do they make (relationship with traditions, ecology, religion, morals, etc.)?

I define *self* as a constantly changing composition of different identities, roles, and discourses (Gergen 1991). Self includes dimensions of personal, social, and cultural identities, which are strongly bound together (Giddens 1991). Gender plays a central role in identity construction. Fear of loosing one's self includes both the idea of the multi-role self and also its threat, the disappearance of agency and contunuity (Damon and Hart 1988). In my study I use portrait art as a way to deal with, understand, and control issues related to the plurality of identities.

The research problem that treats professional identity is based on the discussion related to the expansion of the art teacher's professional image. Image of a wide-range, reflective teacher that is nowadays common in the field of teacher training (Schön 1987) has created an ideal according to which an art teacher should be a cultural worker, a teacher, an artist, and a researcher all in one. The discussions have also touched upon the idea of teaching and research as forms of art. I use this image of multi-role art educator as a starting point of my discussion and analyze its practical possibilities.

In the empirical part of my project I study the identity construction of a preservice art teacher when he or she aspires to understand and support the formation of a teenager's identity. I use PORTRAYAL here as a metaphor that indicates the teacher's task to understand adolescents' world views and to utilize those visual cultures where the young people live in. I also outline nine art education student 'portraits' by describing how the preservice art teachers involved in the project deal with the four-part role model of an art educator. SELF-PORTRAITS, on their part, refer to the self-reflection of both myself and the students near their graduation (art teacher as a researcher).

The third goal of my research project is to develop the method of interpreting images through images based on the principles of postmodern eclecticism and 'recycling', i.e. art interpretation based on appropriations. I consider metaphor a crucial concept for elaborating on my method. Another core concept is intertextuality. Examining intertextuality, I mostly rest on material from the literature research (Eagleton 1983), discussions in various art magazines, and some studies in visual culture. Considering the field of art education, I use approaches based on the role models of artists as well as some poststructuralist ideas (Walker 1996, Gooding-Brown 1997).

In my study the interpreting of images expands from 'high art' to 'everyday art' into which I apply my ideas on productive activities as a means of analysis. I will deepen my model of art understanding by exploring the possibilities of visual conceptualization (symbols, analogs, metaphors) in the fields of traditional, verbally emphasized disciplines of art (art history, aesthetics, criticism, and - as a new area - anthropology that studies multicultural and cross-cultural issues). I also elaborate on the method of pictorial commenting I introduced in my doctoral thesis (pastiche, paraphrase, palimpsest). These areas of the research require paying attention to the study processes a visual artist uses in his or her work.

Methodology

My methodology joins interpretive and critical approaches (Lather 1992, Pearse 1993). I examine a series of action research case studies where a group of student-teacher-researchers work in the context of art education and youth research (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988, McCutcheon & Jung 1990, May 1993). My aim is to develop action research in the direction of artistic research by searching for parallels between the working methods of a reflective teacher and an artist (Collins 1992, Eisner 1991). I emphasize the significance of images as research objects, tools, and means of reporting. In the project's beginning the research group consists of three groups finishing their studies in secondary, high, and vocational schools. The groups are taught by preservice teachers from the Department of Art Education. Later a group of art education students working on their artistically orientated diploma works (e.g. portfolios) will also take part to the project. Both groups report their projects in their master theses. The students' field work is carried out in different schools around the area of Helsinki.

Data collection follows the principles of action research. The nine student-researchers participating the project in spring 2000 are expected to teach their groups for at least one course (38 hours). The course must include a section related to the theme of identity and interpretation of contemporary art. The preservice teachers plan their units together with the research team. I myself work with the teenager groups one afternoon in the museum (4-6 hours) and observe at least one class taught by a preservice teacher (2-4 hours). The classes will be audiovisually recorded; the target students also write about their images and a couple of them are interviewed. The students' appropriations are photographed. Other data consists of notes written by each student-teacher and observer, and of the discussion tapes in work counselling groups. In addition to this, I will analyze the museum tours (36-54 hours) and the video and audio recordings of the classes taught by the nine student-researchers (18-36 hours). The students use also the data as a part of their theses.

I *analyze the data* from the viewpoint of the construction of the adolescents' identity and the professional identity of the art education students. My analysis will be based on theoretical issues and issues emerged from the material collected from the field. Using my model of experiential art understanding, I ask how experiential and conceptual dimensions of the transformation process are realized in the project and if there happens any transfer between self-understanding and the understanding of contemporary art and other visual culture. In my analysis I pay special attention to the role of production in the transformation process and to the meaning of discourse in self-understanding. My analysis is based on the obtained data in a way that I examine what kind of images, writings, and speech the students produce on the given themes. I approach the material from the viewpoint of youth research and of identity research carried out in the field of psychology and sociology. I ask, what forms of visual conceptualization students use in their production. For this purpose I also explore how art education students apply action research in their artistically orientated theses. Exploring professional identity of a preservice teacher is carried out in cooperation with the students. I analyze the material from work counselling and relate it with my own learning diaries.

Research on art education has traditionally been linked to either art research, especially art history, or to education. In my project, art education is connected with the whole field of visual culture and youth research (see Buckingham & Safton-Green 1994, Paley 1995). It is often required that art educators take into account the visual surroundings of young people's everyday life and there have been a lot of discussions about the possibilities of 'low' youth cultures to build bridges to 'high' art. However, there are not many who would have taken this challenge seriously at the level of research. I hope that my focus on the crossroads of youth cultures and artworlds will increase the ability of art educatorsin schools and museums as well as others working with young people to understand the importance of images in identity construction.

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